



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ILLEGAL ALIEN LINKED TO 2005 ALIEN SMUGGLING CONSPIRACY SENTENCED

PHOENIX— Maximo Lerma-Aragon, 26, of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, was sentenced January 8, 2007 to 21 months in prison, by U.S. District Judge Stephen M. McNamee. Lerma-Aragon pleaded guilty on September 27, 2006 to Transportation of Illegal Aliens.

Lerma-Aragon was arrested by the Chandler Police Department in May 2006 on unrelated drug charges and subsequently released to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Upon investigation, ICE agents discovered Lerma-Aragon was linked to an alien smuggling conspiracy occurring in early 2005. That conspiracy operated at least two alien stash houses in Maricopa County and resulted in the federal prosecution of nine other smugglers. Lerma-Aragon's role was to transport the illegal aliens from the desert to the local stash houses. The defendant was also a prior deportee and had been apprehended by immigration authorities on 21 occasions.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The prosecution was handled by Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-597-PHX-SMM
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